

STAT

January 12, 1972

Mr. L. K. White
Executive Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

Executive Registry

72-371

Dear Mr. White:

Thank you for your letter of December 14, concerning my requests under the Freedom of Information Act for certain CIA records.

I am pleased that we agree on the principle of maximum disclosure of records relating to the Kennedy assassination. Perhaps most of the CIA material still classified does not materially affect the major conclusions of the Warren Commission (but I would prefer not to have to rely on the government's opinions about its relevance). Whether it would support those conclusions, as you suggest, is another matter. I think it is well established that many of the Commission's conclusions are not supported by the evidence gathered and made public by the Commission. I am studying (in addition to the assassination itself) the way the Commission worked - e.g., how hard it tried to get information from traditionally secretive agencies such as the CIA and the FBI; all the withheld records are relevant to such issues. I will probably have occasion to write you again if my continuing work involves presently classified CIA records.

I am glad to have the information you provided concerning the photo of the unidentified man. This is a case where the handling of the problem raised as many questions as the material itself. Commission Counsel Wesley Liebeler reportedly said that the picture was taken on September 27, 1963 and given to the FBI before November 18, and that the man was identified as Oswald by a source in the Embassy. (All of this is wrong, according to your letter.) Mr. Liebeler reportedly could not get a satisfactory explanation from the CIA, and was even unable to recontact the agent who had talked to him. (See "Inquest," by Edward Epstein, pp. 93-95.) I am sure I would find your files explaining exactly how all the confusion arose quite interesting. Had I been working for the Warren Commission I would have asked if you got a picture of Oswald from the same source. Nonetheless, I do feel that what I know now provides a reasonable explanation of this incident.

Thank you for sending me Mr. Belin's NYT article, which I had not seen. Mr. Belin took the same broad approach, focusing on the Tippit killing, in a recent article which purported to respond to (but actually evaded) specific charges about Belin's work made by Mrs. Sylvia Meagher. ("Texas Observer," August 13, 1971) The case against Oswald in the death of Tippit is simply not at all as strong as Mr. Belin asserts. (See, for example, Ch. 13 of "Accessories after the Fact" by Sylvia Meagher, or Ch. 6 of "Whitewash" by Harold Weisberg.) I trust that any of your analysts who have been following the assassination controversy in detail can recognize Mr. Belin's article as a smokescreen - more precisely, the summation made by a skillful prosecuting attorney when the facts do not back him up as he had hoped they would.

Sincerely yours,

Paul L. Hoch

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